

The Commonwealth of Virginia Information Technologies Agency and the Virginia Department of Social Services Case Study



Fujitsu PRIMEPOWER™ 1500 servers and Stylistic ST4110 Tablet PCs, provide a solid foundation for State Computing Innovation Promoting Healthier, Independent Citizens through Improved Social Services

Challenge:

Replace an outdated Sun server with a robust, cost-effective UNIX platform that could handle the growing and diverse computational needs of distributed social services agencies across the entire state of Virginia. Devise a cost-effective mobile solution that would free facilities inspection case workers from carrying stacks of paper to sites and then laboriously re-keying compliance information into a mainframe system.

Solution:

On the back-end, the VITA/VDSS team selected the Fujitsu PRIMEPOWER 1500 server to form a solid foundation for social services applications. On the front-end, the VDSS team chose the Fujitsu Stylistic ST4110 Tablet PC to allow field workers to access complex compliance and regulatory information and to collect data directly on site.

Benefits:

The Fujitsu PRIMEPOWER 1500 server has significantly improved application response times. The Fujitsu Stylistic ST4110 Tablet PCs met the requirements for lightweight portability without sacrificing a full-fledged operating system.

“The PRIMEPOWER 1500 has more CPU power (with fewer CPUs), memory and domains than the Sun server it replaced. The migration to the new machine reduced software and hardware maintenance costs, alleviated some performance issues, and provided DSS with extra capacity for future growth.”

**Alex Piven, Database Administration, Group Manager
Virginia Department of Social Services**



Technology Team Powers Virginia Department of Social Services

The Virginia Information Technologies Agency (VITA) is the Commonwealth of Virginia’s consolidated, centralized information technology organization. VITA recently completed the successful transition of its IT infrastructure and staff of 90 executive branch agencies, growing from about 350 employees supporting five locations to nearly 1,285 employees supporting 1,495 locations across Virginia. As the Commonwealth prepares to transform their IT environment, VITA continuously looks for ways to improve computing services to more than 50,000 users by promoting collaboration across the Commonwealth to improve services for citizens and businesses alike.

One department that VITA has helped design systems for is the Virginia Department of Social Services (VDSS). VDSS promotes the development of healthy families and protects Virginia’s children from abuse and neglect with programs such as Child Protective Services and Domestic Violence Prevention. VDSS helps people triumph over poverty, abuse and neglect, achieve self-sufficiency and shape strong futures for themselves, their families and their communities.

Providing a Hand Up with the Goal of Total Independence

VDSS programs are administered by 121 local social services agencies that help citizens throughout Virginia. Some of the programs that VDSS oversees include Food Stamps, Medicaid and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), the cash assistance program that helps families work toward their goal of total independence.

“Overall, weighing the cost of the server, performance, and long-term maintenance costs, we felt Fujitsu offered the best solution.” – Debra Lewis, UNIX Software Manager at VITA

VITA implements computer systems in support of the many programs and initiatives VDSS oversees. For example, the VDSS Division of Child Support Enforcement locates non-custodial parents, assists in establishing paternity and collects hundreds of millions of dollars in support of Virginia’s children each year. The Mapper program, that assists in locating parents, runs on VITA systems alongside many other human welfare applications, such as software that checks people’s eligibility for TANF and an innovative facilities licensing and compliance application.

“The PRIMEPOWER 1500 has more CPU power (with fewer CPUs), memory and domains than the Sun E10000 it replaced.” –Alex Piven, Database

Administration, Group Manager for VDSS

The VITA team knew there were capacity problems with the Sun Server that ran many of the programs critical to the success of VDSS. In order to run newer applications they needed to upgrade. The VITA and VDSS selection team looked for Solaris™ operating system solutions, since they had a significant investment in Solaris UNIX-based applications.

“The CPUs on the server were approaching end-of-life. On-going maintenance could have become a problem as time went on,” said Deborah Lewis, UNIX Software Manager at VITA.

More Power to the Right Place at the Right Time

The team chose to replace the aging equipment with a Fujitsu PRIMEPOWER 1500 server equipped with 21 CPUs at 1.35 GHz each and 52 GB of memory. The selection team, comprised of both VITA and VDSS personnel, was impressed with the Fujitsu processing performance, the partitioning capabilities of the server. Although the many built-in redundancies, such as dual power supplies, provided the added comfort that ongoing system availability was not going to be an issue.

“Overall, weighing the cost of the server, performance, and long-term maintenance costs, we felt Fujitsu offered the best solution,” said Lewis. “After settling on the PRIMEPOWER 1500 server, we took advantage of a pricing discount offered through Fujitsu and bought not just one but two, using one for VDSS systems and the other for work in other departments.” The new servers run Oracle databases, Oracle Financials and Oracle HR, as well as many custom social services programs.

The system that VDSS created to validate recipient eligibility for support benefits uses a lot of computing horsepower. The eligibility application running on the Fujitsu PRIMEPOWER 1500 server works through thousands of lines of logic and requires many

CPU cycles to support the more than 2,000 users who might access the system during peak times. “The PRIMEPOWER 1500 has more CPU power (with fewer CPUs), memory and domains than the Sun server it replaced,” said Alex Piven, Database Administration, Group Manager for VDSS. “The migration to the new machine reduced software and hardware maintenance costs, alleviated some performance issues, and provided DSS with extra capacity for future growth.”

The well-planned migration from the old server to the new one went smoothly, moving exactly on schedule. On delivery, the VITA team had Fujitsu server technicians enabled the PRIMEPOWER server to take advantage of Fujitsu dynamic reconfiguration capabilities. “The Fujitsu team created three floating resources—a combination of CPU and memory—that would dynamically support areas of the server that required a periodic boost in computing power,” said Lance Higley, UNIX Engineer at VITA. “This allowed us to provide additional computer power to those areas of our operation that experience periods of heavy usage, allowing them to remain operationally efficient.”

Mobile Innovation Improves Childcare Facilities Inspection

Not only does VDSS rely on Fujitsu back-end technology. It has also taken advantage of the portable computing revolution and Fujitsu mobility devices. In fact, VDSS received a Governor's Technology Award for its Division of Licensing Programs Help and Information Network (DOLPHIN) project.

The DOLPHIN system manages regulatory compliance for the nearly 7,000 facilities that care for children and vulnerable adults across the state. A fully integrated information system, DOLPHIN enables licensing inspectors to collect data about health and safety regulation compliance, while performing on-site inspections. It used to be that inspectors would have to carry an armload of documents to every child daycare center inspected. Not only did they need a 72-page inspection form for each location, but they also usually took along a stack of paper detailing the more than 500 standards regulating daycare centers.





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Toward e-Government: Eliminating the Paper Work, Saving Countless Hours

The Virginia Department of Social Services purchased 120 slate Fujitsu Stylistic ST4110 Tablet PCs for the DOLPHIN project to facilitate caseworkers' data collection and inspection tasks in the field. While inspecting a site, VDSS workers can review the facility's history and past reports, verify previous violations have been corrected, determine if the facility complies with regulations, and print inspection reports from a portable printer.

"The Fujitsu team created three floating resources—a combination of CPU and memory—that would dynamically support areas of the server that required a periodic boost in computing power." —Lance Higley, UNIX Engineer at VITA.

The Fujitsu Stylistic ST4110 Tablet PCs eliminated old systems requiring caseworkers to fill in paper forms for each regulation and then, while back at the head office, transfer the information into the mainframe system. Now, inspectors use the Tablet PCs to record compliance directly into the database on the mobile device and then upload the information directly to the new PRIMEPOWER server-based main database with no re-keying. This gives case workers the ability to perform the vast majority of their work on-site, where they can inspect facilities and validate compliance against the Commonwealth's standard for that type of facility.

VDSS also purchased Fujitsu docking stations and various keyboards, mobile printers and attaché cases to make the combination of in-office and field experience more productive for busy caseworkers. Mobile workers can choose to use their Tablet PC like a notepad or like a notebook computer. The innovative Fujitsu Stylistic ST Tablet Dock, designed with ease-of-use in mind, transforms the system into a complete desktop computer.

Fujitsu: the Choice for Critical Social Services Systems

In the Commonwealth of Virginia, ground-breaking information systems that support critical social programs—such as Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF), the DOLPHIN program and child welfare—rely on Fujitsu innovative and reliable technology.